

In response to the rejection of claim 1 as being anticipated by the WO '303 reference, Applicant has amended claim 1 to positively recite, in part, that the hopper supported by the hull, which is adapted to receive the material, includes a floor, and that at least a portion of the floor is moveable to permit movement of the material in the hopper.

By comparison, the cited WO '303 reference does not teach or even suggest a hopper having a moveable floor. Instead, the WO '303 reference employs a suction-based dredge which routes the dredged material into the well 9 using a plurality of pipes 3, 12, and 8, under the assistance of a pump 7. The material is then offloaded by sucking the material out of the well 9 using the perforated pipe 11 disposed at the bottom of the well 9. See page 5, lines 4-7. There would be no suggestion to discard this aspect of the reference, nor has any such suggestion been provided. Accordingly, the rejection is overcome and claim 1 is in allowable form.

Claims 3, 5-18 and 21-22 depend from claim 1, either directly or through intervening claims. Therefore, claims 3, 5-18 and 21-22 are in allowable form.

In response to the rejection of claim 23 as being anticipated by the WO '303 reference, applicants have amended claim 23 to recite, in part, that the vessel includes a nonsuction-based dredge assembly mounted to the hull, with the dredge assembly being adapted to recover the material from the bottom surface.

By comparison, the reference plainly relates to a suction-based dredge assembly. There would be no teachings or suggestions to discard the suction-based system of the reference and substitute a nonsuction-based system, as such a modification would render the pipes/pumps of the reference entirely superfluous. Accordingly, claim 23 is in allowable form.

Claims 24-26 and 28-31 depend from claim 23, either directly or through intervening claims. Accordingly, those claims are also in allowable form.

In response to the rejection of claim 32 as being anticipated by the WO '303 reference, applicants have amended claim 33 to positively recite, in part, a hopper including a floor conveyor routed over a series of rollers, the floor conveyor operable to shift the material from a first part of the hopper to a second part of the hopper, and a distribution conveyor. The distribution conveyor is arranged to receive the material from a selected one of the floor conveyor or from the conveyor system, the distribution conveyor moveably mounted to the hull and having a first end and a second end, the distribution conveyor defining a third desired path wherein the material may be deposited at a location remote from the hull.

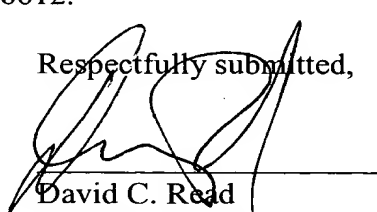
By comparison, the cited reference does not teach or even suggest a floor conveyor or a distribution conveyor that receives material from a selected one of the floor conveyor or the conveyor system. Accordingly, claim 32, and the claims dependent thereon, are in allowable form.

Attached hereto is a "**VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**" detailing the changes to each of the above-amended claims.

In view of the foregoing the above-identified application is in condition for allowance. In the event there is any remaining issue that the Examiner believes can be resolved by a telephone conference, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned attorney at (312) 474-6612.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 2.

Please amend the claims as follows:

1.(Amended)A multi-purpose vessel for use when recovering material from a bottom surface of a body of water, the vessel comprising:

a hull;

a dredge assembly mounted to the hull, the dredge assembly being adapted to recover the material from the bottom surface;

a hopper supported by the hull, the hopper being adapted to receive the material and including a floor, at least a portion of the floor being moveable to permit movement of the material in the hopper; and

a transfer conveyor adapted to receive the material from the dredge assembly, the transfer conveyor being shiftable between a first position in which the transfer conveyor is operable to convey the material toward the hopper, the transfer conveyor further being shiftable to a second position in which the transfer conveyor is operable to convey the material off the vessel.

3.(Amended)A vessel as defined on claim [2] 1, wherein the moveable floor includes a flexible belt mounted on a plurality of rollers.

5.(Amended)A vessel as defined in claim 1, wherein the [hopper includes] moveable floor comprises a slat conveyor [for moving the material in the hopper].

6.(Amended)A vessel as defined in claim 1, including a distribution conveyor comprising a rotatable belt conveyor, the distribution conveyor moveably mounted to the hull and having a first end and a second end, and further including a discharge conveyor having a portion extending into the hopper and being adapted to discharge the material from the hopper to the distribution conveyor adjacent the first end of the distribution conveyor, the second end of the distribution conveyor [second end] being moveable to a desired position to thereby unload the material at a desired location.

10.(Amended)A vessel as defined in claim [-1] 9, including a rack and pinion arranged to rotate the distribution conveyor on the turret assembly.

11.(Amended)A vessel as defined in claim 1, wherein the transfer conveyor comprises a rotatable belt, and wherein the transfer conveyor is moveably mounted to the hull.

13.(Amended)A vessel as defined in claim [-1] 12, including a rack and pinion arranged to rotate the transfer conveyor on the turret assembly.

15.(Amended)A vessel as defined in claim 1, further including a discharge auger mounted to the hull and having a portion extending into the hopper and arranged to cooperate with the moveable floor to discharge the material from the hopper.

23.(Amended)A multi-purpose vessel for use when recovering material from a bottom surface of a body of water, the vessel comprising:

a hull;

a nonsuction-based dredge assembly mounted to the hull, the dredge assembly being adapted to recover the material from the bottom surface;

a conveyor system, the conveyor system including a first portion adapted to receive the material from the dredge assembly, a moveable second portion, and a distribution conveyor, the second portion being moveable to a first position in which the second portion is adapted to receive the material from the first portion and to convey the material to a first desired location disposed a first distance away from the hull, the second portion further being moveable to a second position in which the second portion is adapted to convey the material to the distribution conveyor, the distribution conveyor being adapted to convey the material a second distance greater than the first distance away from the hull.

32.(Amended)A multi-purpose vessel for use on a body of water, the vessel comprising:

a hull;

a dredge assembly mounted to the hull, the dredge assembly being adapted to recover material from a bottom surface of the body of water;

a hopper supported by the hull, the hopper being adapted to receive the material, the hopper including a floor conveyor routed over a series of rollers, the floor conveyor operable to shift the material from a first part of the hopper to a second part of the hopper; and

a conveyor system, the conveyor system including a first portion adapted to receive the material from the dredge assembly, the conveyor system further including a moveable second portion adapted to receive the material from the first portion and to convey the

material along a plurality of desired paths, a first of the desired paths being away from the hull and a second of the desired paths being toward the hopper[.] and

a distribution conveyor, the distribution conveyor arranged to receive the material from a selected one of the floor conveyor or from the conveyor system, the distribution conveyor moveably mounted to the hull and having a first end and a second end, the distribution conveyor defining a third desired path wherein the material may be deposited at a location remote from the hull.

34.(Amended) The vessel as defined in claim 32, [wherein the distribution assembly includes a distribution conveyor moveably mounted to the hull and having a first end and a second end, the distribution conveyor defining a third desired path wherein the material may be deposited at a location remote from the hull, the distribution assembly] the distribution conveyor further including a moveable counterweight, the counterweight being positionable on the distribution assembly so as to counteract the forces applied to the distribution conveyor by the material traveling along the third desired path.